

ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



Episode #502
Ice Skating Wars: Tonya Harding vs. Nancy Kerrigan
3rd Sep, 2024

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Transcript

[00:00:05] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:11] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:20] I'm Alastair Budge, and today is part two of our three-part mini-series on controversial sportspeople and sporting controversies.

[00:00:28] In case you missed it, part one was on the self-destructive footballing [icon¹](#), George Best, part three is going to be on Lance Armstrong, and today's episode is going to be on Tonya Harding.

[00:00:41] She was a [phenomenally²](#) talented figure skater and someone who almost had it all, before a nasty incident changed everything.

[00:00:50] So, let's not waste a minute and get talking about Tonya Harding,

¹ a famous or very important person

² extremely or very much

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[00:00:57] At half past two, on January 6th, 1994, a 25-year-old American lady called Nancy Kerrigan had just finished practising her skating [routine](#)³ at Cabo Arena, in Detroit.

[00:01:12] She was one of the best skaters in the country, and a camera [crew](#)⁴ was there to watch her train.

[00:01:20] You can see the footage on YouTube. Kerrigan is skating around in a white dress and black gloves to classical music.

[00:01:29] The camera follows her as she gets off the [rink](#)⁵, and puts on the protective [sleeves](#)⁶ for her ice skates.

[00:01:37] With [telltale](#)⁷ 90s music in the background, she heads through a blue curtain towards her dressing room. The cameraman switches off his camera, no doubt thinking

³ programme, schedule

⁴ a group of people who worked together

⁵ a surface where the skating took place

⁶ covers

⁷ suggestive, indicating

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that he's got the [footage](#)⁸ he needs, and he can [clock off](#)⁹ for the day, or go and have a cup of coffee on a freezing January afternoon.

[00:01:59] But seconds later, just after Kerrigan passed through the curtain, he heard a [deathly](#)¹⁰ [scream](#)¹¹.

[00:02:07] It's Kerrigan.

[00:02:09] He switches on the camera again and rushes through to find this [star](#)¹² athlete on the ground, screaming out in pain.

[00:02:19] Confused [onlookers](#)¹³ try to help her, asking “What happened”.

[00:02:25] All she can do is repeat “Why, why, why?” over and over.

⁸ recorded video or film

⁹ finish work

¹⁰ resembling or suggestive of death

¹¹ a loud, high-pitched cry

¹² very famous

¹³ people who watched it happening

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[00:02:32] The pain, the [grief¹⁴](#), it is plain to see on her face and hear in her voice. This is the look of a young woman who has been [viciously¹⁵](#) attacked for [seemingly¹⁶](#) no reason.

[00:02:46] She describes what happened.

[00:02:48] She was walking and she felt a huge pain in her right leg.

[00:02:53] As she fell to the ground, she saw a guy rushing away carrying what she described as “some sort of hard black stick”.

[00:03:04] The video [footage](#) then follows men, presumably her trainers and coaches, who rush around the arena trying to [track down¹⁷](#) this “white guy in a leather jacket”.

[00:03:16] [To no avail¹⁸](#), there is no sign of him.

¹⁴ deep sadness

¹⁵ in a very cruel or violent way

¹⁶ appearing to be

¹⁷ find after searching for him

¹⁸ without success or result

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[00:03:19] The attack resulted in serious **bruising**¹⁹ to her knee and damage to the **tendons**²⁰ on her right leg, her “landing leg”, the leg on which she would land first after a big jump.

[00:03:32] Fortunately, the **blow**²¹ didn’t break any bones, or **shatter**²² the knee.

[00:03:37] If it had, it could have meant she never skated again.

[00:03:42] Nevertheless, it was a bad injury and she was forced to **pull out of**²³ the tournament she was training for, the 1994 U.S. Figure Skating Championships, which was scheduled for two days later.

[00:03:57] Kerrigan was one of the favourites to win, and instead, with Kerrigan unable to participate, the Gold Medal went to her main rival, 24-year-old Tonya Harding.

[00:04:11] Naturally, there was a police investigation into the **assault**²⁴.

[00:04:15] The first question was the one that Kerrigan repeated again and again.

¹⁹ marks on the skin from injury

²⁰ tough cords in the body that connect muscles to bones

²¹ strong hit

²² break into pieces

²³ withdraw or stop being involved in it

²⁴ violent attack

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[00:04:20] Why?

[00:04:22] What reason would anyone have to attack her?

[00:04:25] They weren't trying to steal anything from her, it wasn't like she was involved in crime or this was the work of a [jealous](#)²⁵ former lover.

[00:04:33] It seemed that the objective of the [assault](#) was to injure her, presumably so that she wasn't able to compete. Remember, the [blow](#) was struck to the right leg, her landing leg.

[00:04:47] And who would want her not to be able to compete?

[00:04:51] Well, [all eyes turned](#)²⁶ to who would stand to benefit with Kerrigan out of the picture.

[00:04:59] The obvious candidate was her main rival, Tonya Harding, the woman who had taken first place in the competition.

²⁵ insecure or possessive

²⁶ everyone started to look at

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[00:05:07] Harding and Kerrigan were **fierce**²⁷ rivals, they were right **at the top of their game**²⁸ as two of the **undisputed**²⁹ best skaters in the United States.

[00:05:18] But they were very different people.

[00:05:21] Nancy Kerrigan looked like how people expected a skating champion to look.

[00:05:28] She was a classic beauty, full of grace and style. A big smile, **flowing**³⁰ dark hair, and a **petite**³¹ figure.

[00:05:38] She had not grown up with much money around her, and her father worked multiple jobs to pay for her skating lessons, but she was seen as a **classy**³², a sort of fairy-like ice princess.

[00:05:52] As a result, she was **flooded with**³³ commercial deals to promote a wide range of products, everything from sportswear to watches.

²⁷ very strong or intense

²⁸ performing at their highest level

²⁹ accepted by everyone without argument

³⁰ hanging or moving smoothly

³¹ small and thin in an attractive way

³² stylish and sophisticated

³³ filled or covered with a large amount of

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[00:06:02] This was important because skating was and still is an expensive sport.

[00:06:09] Not only is there all of the [gear](#)³⁴, the fancy clothes and [sequined](#)³⁵ dresses, but there's all the travel, the competitions, the hotels, and so on.

[00:06:20] At this point it was still a relatively poorly paid sport in terms of the money you got from winning competitions, so top skaters would take any commercial [endorsements](#)³⁶ they could.

[00:06:32] Now, Tonya Harding, on the other hand, didn't look like how the American public or the American Skating Association expected a skating champion to look.

[00:06:44] She wasn't a classic beauty, she was muscular, fast and strong rather than [dainty](#)³⁷ and graceful.

[00:06:53] She didn't behave how the American Figure Skating Association thought a champion skater should behave. She smoked, she drank, and she went on fishing and hunting trips with her father.

³⁴ equipment or clothes used for that particular purpose

³⁵ decorated with small, shiny discs

³⁶ support or agreements

³⁷ delicate and pretty

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[00:07:07] She had grown up very poor, and as the media started to report on Kerrigan's assault, and contrast the two women, Harding was [branded³⁸](#) as "[white trash³⁹](#)", someone who shouldn't be anywhere near the middle-class [sanctuary⁴⁰](#) of an ice [rink](#).

[00:07:24] Her personal life in terms of her relationships also didn't fit with the public expectations of what a young sportswoman should be doing.

[00:07:34] She had got married young, at 19, and had [filed for divorce⁴¹](#) a year later.

[00:07:40] She was, reportedly, [talked out of it⁴²](#) by the American Figure Skating Association, as being a divorced skating champion just didn't [fit the mould⁴³](#). In a country that [prides itself⁴⁴](#) on family values, this was unacceptable.

[00:07:58] See, particularly at the time we're talking about, the late 1980s and early 1990s, women's skating was all about appearance. Women had to meet certain

³⁸ marked out or described

³⁹ an insulting term for poor white people, often seen as uneducated

⁴⁰ a safe or peaceful place

⁴¹ started the legal process to end the marriage

⁴² persuaded not to do it

⁴³ match the typical pattern or expectation

⁴⁴ feels very satisfied and proud about them

standards not just of beauty and style but of lifestyle and behaviour and Tonya Harding didn't look or act the part.

[00:08:21] When she realised that she would never meet these [ridiculous](#)⁴⁵ standards of femininity, she started to lean into her own more [tomboy](#)⁴⁶, bad-girl style.

[00:08:33] She wore blue [eyeliner](#)⁴⁷, she would dance to the Batman soundtrack, she was tired of pretending to be someone she wasn't.

[00:08:42] Whatever her appearance, she was [undisputedly](#)⁴⁸ an exceptional athlete.

[00:08:49] She was stronger and faster than most other skaters. She was the first American woman to successfully land something called a triple axel jump, where you spin around three times in the air, in fact, you spin around 3.5 times, doing a 1,260-degree spin.

[00:09:10] Now, I am no skating expert, but to [underline](#)⁴⁹ quite how amazing this is, and what an achievement it was, only 3 American female skaters have ever successfully managed one in a competition, and Tonya Harding was one of them.

⁴⁵ very silly or unreasonable

⁴⁶ a girl who enjoys activities usually associated with boys

⁴⁷ a cosmetic used to draw a line around the eyes

⁴⁸ without a doubt, certainly

⁴⁹ emphasise or highlight

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[00:09:28] It requires speed, strength and balance in very high quantities, and Tonya Harding had this extremely rare combination of all three.

[00:09:38] So, you have these two rivals, both very talented and skilful but completely different, and in the [aftermath](#)⁵⁰ of the attack, the American media [relished](#)⁵¹ in comparing and contrasting the two women.

[00:09:54] Kerrigan, the graceful and [flawless](#)⁵² one, the one who looks like a princess and who [ticks all the boxes](#)⁵³ about how a skating champion should look and should behave.

[00:10:05] And of course, the victim of a violent attack.

[00:10:09] And then Harding, the athletic and powerful one, but the one who has really had to fight to get to where she was, battle against the [snobbery](#)⁵⁴ of the American skating system and is still something of an [outcast](#)⁵⁵.

[00:10:24] And the one who had all to gain from her rival being injured.

⁵⁰ period after the unfortunate event

⁵¹ enjoyed or took pleasure

⁵² without any mistakes or faults

⁵³ meets all the requirements or expectations

⁵⁴ the act of looking down on her because she was seen as less important

⁵⁵ a person who is not accepted by others

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[00:10:29] Now, back to our story.

[00:10:32] The [assault](#) took place on the afternoon of January 6th, and Nancy Kerrigan was forced to [withdraw](#)⁵⁶ from the National Figure Skating Championships.

[00:10:41] Two days later, her [arch-rival](#)⁵⁷, Tonya Harding, won first place and therefore qualified for a place on the US Olympic team that would go to Norway the following month.

[00:10:54] And a week later, on January 13th, the police made an announcement.

[00:11:00] They had made an [arrest](#)⁵⁸, or rather, [arrests](#)⁵⁹.

[00:11:05] They announced that they had [arrested](#)⁶⁰ two men in conjunction with the assault: Shane Stant was the man the police believed had carried out the attack, the man who had [dealt the blow](#)⁶¹.

[00:11:17] And the second was a man named Shawn Eckardt.

⁵⁶ remove herself or stop taking part in it

⁵⁷ main or most important competitor or enemy

⁵⁸ an act of catching or taking people into custody by legal authority

⁵⁹ acts of catching or taking people into custody by legal authority

⁶⁰ caught or taken into custody

⁶¹ delivered or caused the hit or injury

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[00:11:23] This man, the man who had [facilitated](#)⁶² the attack, just so happened to be...Tonya Harding's [bodyguard](#)⁶³.

[00:11:32] Now, we won't get into all of the details about the arrests and how they were caught, but these two men were [far from](#)⁶⁴ professionals. They had left [tonnes of](#)⁶⁵ [clues](#)⁶⁶ and evidence behind. The media referred to them as "[hitmen](#)⁶⁷", but they were amateurs and [opportunists](#)⁶⁸. As a result, it didn't take long for the police to [track them down](#)⁶⁹.

[00:11:57] With the [arrest](#) of Tonya Harding's bodyguard, this set off all sorts of alarm bells.

[00:12:03] Something about the attack had seemed fishy before.

⁶² made it easier or possible

⁶³ a person hired to protect her from harm

⁶⁴ not at all, very different from

⁶⁵ a large amount of

⁶⁶ hints or pieces of information

⁶⁷ people hired to kill

⁶⁸ people who took advantage of the situation for their own gain

⁶⁹ find them after searching

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[00:12:07] But surely, surely this couldn't have been the work of one of her [fellow](#)⁷⁰ skaters?

[00:12:13] To arrange a violent attack on a rival so that she was [out of the picture](#)⁷¹, this was [the stuff of](#)⁷² fiction, of Hollywood movies, not of real life.

[00:12:24] In the days following the arrests, [the dominoes started to tumble](#)⁷³, the suspects started to talk and [tell all](#)⁷⁴.

[00:12:34] It was revealed that the ultimate [architect](#)⁷⁵ of the plot was none other than Tonya Harding's ex-husband, Jeff Gillooly.

[00:12:44] Now, I should tell you a bit about this relationship, because it's both important and complicated.

⁷⁰ people who had the same job or interests as her

⁷¹ no longer involved or relevant

⁷² the material or basis for

⁷³ the event started causing a series of other related events

⁷⁴ reveal everything

⁷⁵ the person who designed or planned it

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[00:12:51] Tonya Harding had met Gilloly when she was 15. It was a passionate relationship, but, according to Harding, an [abusive](#)⁷⁶ one.

[00:13:01] Her husband would physically and mentally [abuse](#)⁷⁷ her, but Harding stayed with him.

[00:13:08] At the time of the [assault](#), January 1994, they were still living together despite having got divorced the year before.

[00:13:17] And when Gillooly, the ex-husband, was questioned by the FBI, he [broke down](#)⁷⁸ and admitted everything. He was the [mastermind](#)⁷⁹, or at least the main organiser, of the entire thing.

[00:13:31] He had organised and paid for the attack.

[00:13:36] But the question on everyone's lips was "was he really acting alone, or was he [covering up](#)⁸⁰ his ex-wife's involvement? How involved was the woman who stood to gain the most from it?"

⁷⁶ involving bad treatment, especially in a violent or cruel way

⁷⁷ treat in a cruel or violent way

⁷⁸ lost control of his emotions

⁷⁹ the person who planned and directed it

⁸⁰ hiding the truth about it

[00:13:50] Gillooly claimed that it wasn't his wife's idea, but that she knew about it before it happened and had supported it when he told her, saying that it was a "good idea".

[00:14:02] To this day, Tonya Harding has denied having any knowledge of the plan before it took place.

[00:14:09] She would have been horrified, she says, to have found out that they were planning to do such a thing.

[00:14:15] Harding and Kerrigan were competitors, not rivals, and she didn't need to injure her competitor to win the competition fair and square.

[00:14:25] But, she hadn't been telling the complete truth...

[00:14:29] On January 26th, 1994, 20 days after the assault, Tonya Harding gave a press conference where she admitted that she had discovered that "persons close to her" were involved in the attack, but she didn't immediately report this to the authorities.

[00:14:48] In other words, she had found out that her ex-husband organised the assault but she kept this hidden from the police.

[00:14:57] Now, while all of this was going on, there was still the big question of who was going to go to the Winter Olympics in Norway the following month.

[00:15:07] Under normal circumstances, the first and second place in the U.S. Figure Skating Championships would have won a place on the team.

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[00:15:15] But Kerrigan, one of the favourites, had been [assaulted](#)⁸¹ and therefore wasn't able to compete, and Harding was [living under this cloud of](#)⁸² suspicion of being involved in the [assault](#).

[00:15:28] As you'll remember, Tonya Harding did win the national championships, she came first, so she automatically qualified for the Olympics.

[00:15:37] And a 13-year-old child [prodigy](#)⁸³ called Michelle Kwan came second.

[00:15:43] As a quick [side note](#)⁸⁴, Michelle Kwan has had a super interesting life. She has guest-starred in both The Simpsons and Family Guy, and is now the US Ambassador to Belize. But that's a story for another day.

[00:15:58] Taking it back to 1994, it was decided, partly because Kerrigan had been assaulted, and also because Kwan was so young, to give Kwan's place on the Olympic team to Kerrigan, assuming she could recover in time.

[00:16:13] After [intense](#)⁸⁵ physio and rehabilitation and even more [intense](#) training, she was considered fit enough to go to the Winter Olympics.

⁸¹ attacked physically or violently

⁸² feeling burdened by a constant worry

⁸³ a young person who was very talented or skilled

⁸⁴ an additional, less important piece of information

⁸⁵ very strong or extreme

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[00:16:23] As to Tonya Harding's place on the team, there were some loud voices pushing to [revoke](#)⁸⁶ it, to [kick her off](#)⁸⁷ the team, but as there was no proof of her involvement in the [assault](#), these came to nothing.

[00:16:37] She hadn't been officially charged with anything; it was strongly suspected that she was involved in some way, and it seemed incredibly [fishy](#)⁸⁸, but nothing was official.

[00:16:50] The two representatives of the United States of America in the Winter Olympics were, therefore, Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan.

[00:16:59] As you might imagine, or as you might remember from the time, this was a media story that [wrote itself](#)⁸⁹. Nancy Kerrigan was the "good one", the one who had recovered from this violent [assault](#), and Tonya Harding was the "bad one", the one who many suspected had ordered the [hit](#)⁹⁰ on her rival.

[00:17:21] So, what happened?

⁸⁶ take it back or cancel it

⁸⁷ remove her from it

⁸⁸ suspicious or strange

⁸⁹ happened in such a way that the story was easy to tell

⁹⁰ attack or blow

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[00:17:23] Well, Kerrigan put in an absolutely [stellar](#)⁹¹ performance on the ice, [wowing](#)⁹² the crowds.

[00:17:30] And she almost claimed the gold medal, only [narrowly](#)⁹³ losing out to the 15-year-old Ukrainian skater, Oksana Baiul, who put in a [jaw-dropping](#)⁹⁴ performance.

[00:17:43] As for Tonya Harding, she was disappointing, finishing in eighth place.

[00:17:49] And on her return to the United States, things went from bad to worse.

[00:17:55] Failing to tell the police about her husband's involvement was a serious crime.

[00:18:02] On March 16, 1994, a couple of weeks after the Olympics, it was announced that Tonya Harding had pleaded guilty to “conspiracy to [hinder](#)⁹⁵ prosecution”, which included helping [concoct](#)⁹⁶ a [cover story](#)⁹⁷ for her ex-husband and lying to the FBI.

⁹¹ excellent or outstanding

⁹² impressing them greatly

⁹³ only just, by only a small margin

⁹⁴ extremely surprising or impressive

⁹⁵ make it more difficult or slow it down

⁹⁶ create or invent

⁹⁷ a false explanation to hide the truth

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[00:18:20] She was given three years of probation, a \$100,000 fine and 500 hours of community service.

[00:18:30] That was the official, criminal punishment.

[00:18:33] But the bigger punishment was the complete **obliteration**⁹⁸ of her skating career.

[00:18:40] She was **stripped of**⁹⁹ her gold medal at the nationals and given a lifetime **ban**¹⁰⁰ from American professional skating.

[00:18:48] And throughout this entire story, she was **hounded**¹⁰¹ by the media, **portrayed**¹⁰² as the dark and angry woman who tried to cheat her way to the top.

[00:19:00] Given the time that has **elapsed**¹⁰³ since the event, and how she was painted during this media circus, she is remembered by many as not just the person who

⁹⁸ destruction or removal

⁹⁹ it was taken away from her as a punishment

¹⁰⁰ the act of not being allowed to participate

¹⁰¹ followed or bothered persistently

¹⁰² shown or represented

¹⁰³ passed by

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ordered the **assault**, but as the person who **dealt the blow**, the person who **swung**¹⁰⁴ the **baton**¹⁰⁵ herself.

[00:19:18] In recent years there has been a renewed interest in telling the truth of Tonya Harding's story, and in many cases, she is **painted**¹⁰⁶ more as an **unwitting**¹⁰⁷ victim than as a violent and angry cheat.

[00:19:34] If she is to be believed—and for the absence of doubt, this is the official position of the authorities—she never wanted this assault, she never knew about it before it took place, and had she known about it **beforehand**¹⁰⁸, she would have done everything she could to stop it.

[00:19:52] The fault lies **squarely**¹⁰⁹ with her ex-husband who thought this could be her ticket, and therefore his ticket, to riches.

¹⁰⁴ moved or used

¹⁰⁵ hard stick or club

¹⁰⁶ described or shown

¹⁰⁷ not aware of the full facts

¹⁰⁸ before it happened

¹⁰⁹ directly or firmly

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[00:20:01] He did it without her [consent¹¹⁰](#), and the end result was that her career was destroyed and she was publicly [vilified¹¹¹](#) as the woman who attacked her rival.

[00:20:13] Tonya Harding was always an outsider.

[00:20:16] She looked different, talked differently, behaved differently and skated differently.

[00:20:21] Yes, she could have told the police what she knew earlier, but is that enough for a \$100,000 [fine¹¹²](#) and a lifetime [ban](#) from doing the only thing she had ever loved?

[00:20:34] I'll let you be the judge of that.

[00:20:38] OK then, that is it for today's episode on Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan.

[00:20:43] As a reminder, this is part two of a three-part mini-series on controversial sportspeople. Part one was about the self-destructive footballer, George Best, and part three will be on another sportsperson who had a [crashing¹¹³](#) fall, Lance Armstrong.

[00:20:59] As always, I would love to know what you thought of this episode.

¹¹⁰ permission or agreement

¹¹¹ criticised very harshly and unfairly

¹¹² a sum of money to be paid as punishment

¹¹³ coming down with great force

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[00:21:03] Do you remember this event, and how the media treated Tonya Harding? Do you think she is telling the truth, and do you think her punishment was deserved?

[00:21:12] I would love to know, so let's get this discussion started.

[00:21:16] You can head right into our community forum, which is at community.leonardoenglish.com and get chatting away to other curious minds.

[00:21:24] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:21:29] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Icon	a famous or very important person
Phenomenally	extremely or very much
Routine	programme, schedule
Crew	a group of people who worked together
Rink	a surface where the skating took place
Sleeves	covers
Telltale	suggestive, indicating
Footage	recorded video or film
Clock off	finish work
Deathly	resembling or suggestive of death
Scream	a loud, high-pitched cry
Star	very famous
Onlookers	people who watched it happening

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Grief	deep sadness
Viciously	in a very cruel or violent way
Seemingly	appearing to be
Track down	find after searching for him
To no avail	without success or result
Bruising	marks on the skin from injury
Tendons	tough cords in the body that connect muscles to bones
Blow	strong hit
Shatter	break into pieces
Pull out of	withdraw or stop being involved in it
Assault	violent attack
Jealous	insecure or possessive
All eyes turned	everyone started to look at
Fierce	very strong or intense
At the top of their game	performing at their highest level

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Undisputed	accepted by everyone without argument
Flowing	hanging or moving smoothly
Petite	small and thin in an attractive way
Classy	stylish and sophisticated
Flooded with	filled or covered with a large amount of
Gear	equipment or clothes used for that particular purpose
Sequined	decorated with small, shiny discs
Endorsements	support or agreements
Dainty	delicate and pretty
Branded	marked out or described
White trash	an insulting term for poor white people, often seen as uneducated
Sanctuary	a safe or peaceful place
Filed for divorce	started the legal process to end the marriage
Talked out of it	persuaded not to do it
Fit the mould	match the typical pattern or expectation

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Prides itself	feels very satisfied and proud about them
Ridiculous	very silly or unreasonable
Tomboy	a girl who enjoys activities usually associated with boys
Eyeliner	a cosmetic used to draw a line around the eyes
Undisputedly	without a doubt, certainly
Underline	emphasise or highlight
Aftermath	period after the unfortunate event
Relished	enjoyed or took pleasure
Flawless	without any mistakes or faults
Ticks all the boxes	meets all the requirements or expectations
Snobbery	the act of looking down on her because she was seen as less important
Outcast	a person who is not accepted by others
Withdraw	remove herself or stop taking part in it
Arch-rival	main or most important competitor or enemy
Arrest	an act of catching or taking people into custody by legal authority

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Arrests	acts of catching or taking people into custody by legal authority
Arrested	caught or taken into custody
Dealt the blow	delivered or caused the hit or injury
Facilitated	made it easier or possible
Bodyguard	a person hired to protect her from harm
Far from	not at all, very different from
Tonnes of	a large amount of
Clues	hints or pieces of information
Hitmen	people hired to kill
Opportunists	people who took advantage of the situation for their own gain
Track them down	find them after searching
Fellow	people who had the same job or interests as her
Out of the picture	no longer involved or relevant
The stuff of	the material or basis for
The dominoes started to tumble	the event started causing a series of other related events

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Tell all	reveal everything
Architect	the person who designed or planned it
Abusive	involving bad treatment, especially in a violent or cruel way
Abuse	treat in a cruel or violent way
Broke down	lost control of his emotions
Mastermind	the person who planned and directed it
Covering up	hiding the truth about it
Assaulted	attacked physically or violently
Living under this cloud of	feeling burdened by a constant worry
Prodigy	a young person who was very talented or skilled
Side note	an additional, less important piece of information
Intense	very strong or extreme
Revoke	take it back or cancel it
Kick her off	remove her from it
Fishy	suspicious or strange

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Wrote itself	happened in such a way that the story was easy to tell
Hit	attack or blow
Stellar	excellent or outstanding
Wowing	impressing them greatly
Narrowly	only just, by only a small margin
Jaw-dropping	extremely surprising or impressive
Hinder	make it more difficult or slow it down
Concoct	create or invent
Cover story	a false explanation to hide the truth
Obliteration	destruction or removal
Stripped of	it was taken away from her as a punishment
Ban	the act of not being allowed to participate
Hounded	followed or bothered persistently
Portrayed	shown or represented
Elapsed	passed by

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Swung	moved or used
Baton	hard stick or club
Painted	described or shown
Unwitting	not aware of the full facts
Beforehand	before it happened
Squarely	directly or firmly
Consent	permission or agreement
Vilified	criticised very harshly and unfairly
Fine	a sum of money to be paid as punishment
Crashing	coming down with great force

Language spotlight

1. The dominoes started to tumble

- **Meaning:** This phrase means that one event caused a chain reaction, leading to several other related events.
- **Synonyms:** the chain reaction began, things started falling into place
- **Antonyms:** nothing happened, everything remained stable
- **Examples:**
 - When the company announced layoffs, **the dominoes started to tumble**, and many other businesses in the area also began to struggle.
 - Once she missed the deadline, **the dominoes started to tumble**, and her entire project fell apart.

2. All eyes turned

- **Meaning:** This phrase means that everyone's attention was directed toward something or someone.
- **Synonyms:** everyone focused, attention shifted

- **Antonyms:** everyone ignored, attention diverted
- **Examples:**
 - As soon as the guest of honour entered the room, **all eyes turned** to her.
 - When the loud noise was heard, **all eyes turned** towards the door to see what was happening.

3. To no avail

- **Meaning:** This means that an effort was made but without any success or result.
- **Synonyms:** unsuccessfully, in vain
- **Antonyms:** successfully, with positive results
- **Examples:**
 - She searched for her missing keys for hours, **to no avail**.
 - They tried to fix the broken machine, but **to no avail**; it still wouldn't start.

4. Fit the mould

- **Meaning:** This expression means to match a particular pattern or set of expectations.
- **Synonyms:** conform, match the standard
- **Antonyms:** stand out, be different
- **Examples:**
 - He didn't **fit the mould** of a typical student, as he preferred hands-on learning to reading books.
 - The new employee **fits the mould** perfectly; she's exactly what the company was looking for.

5. Living under this cloud of

- **Meaning:** This phrase means experiencing ongoing worry, fear, or sadness due to a particular issue.
- **Synonyms:** burdened by, weighed down by
- **Antonyms:** free from worry, carefree
- **Examples:**

- After the scandal, the politician was **living under this cloud of** suspicion and doubt.
- She has been **living under this cloud of** grief since her father passed away last year.

Quiz

Listening Comprehension Multiple Choice Questions

1. What weapon was used in the attack on Nancy Kerrigan?
 - a) A gun
 - b) A knife
 - c) A hard black stick
 - d) A baseball bat

2. Why did some people suspect Tonya Harding was involved in the attack?
 - a) She had a history of violence
 - b) She would benefit from Kerrigan being unable to compete
 - c) She was seen near the scene of the crime
 - d) She had publicly threatened Kerrigan before

3. What notable achievement did Tonya Harding have in her skating career?
 - a) She won the Olympic gold medal
 - b) She landed a quadruple jump
 - c) She was the first American woman to successfully land a triple axel
 - d) She won multiple world championships

4. How did the 1994 Winter Olympics end for Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan?
 - a) Harding won gold, and Kerrigan finished second
 - b) Kerrigan won silver, and Harding finished eighth
 - c) Both skaters did not participate
 - d) Kerrigan won gold, and Harding finished fourth

5. What was the final outcome for Tonya Harding's skating career after the incident?
 - a) She continued to compete internationally
 - b) She received a lifetime ban from American professional skating

- c) She retired voluntarily
- d) She switched to coaching

True or False

- 6. Nancy Kerrigan was attacked while practising on the ice. (True/False)
- 7. The incident was quickly resolved without any investigation. (True/False)
- 8. The media coverage of the Kerrigan-Harding scandal was minimal at the time.
(True/False)
- 9. Jeff Gillooly, Tonya's ex-husband, confessed to orchestrating the attack on
Nancy Kerrigan. (True/False)
- 10. The athletes involved were top competitors in their sport. (True/False)

Fill-in-the-Blank

- 11. They were right at the top of their ____ as two of the undisputed best skaters in
the United States.
- 12. It was a bad injury and she was forced to ____ out of the tournament she was
training for.

13. She had got married young, at 19, and had _____ for divorce a year later.
14. Two days later, her _____-rival, Tonya Harding, won first place and therefore qualified for a place on the US Olympic team.
15. To arrange a violent attack on a rival so that she was out of the _____, this was the _____ of fiction, of Hollywood movies, not of real life.

Vocabulary Practice

16. What does "**icon**" mean in the context of the podcast?
- a) A small picture on a screen
 - b) A symbol representing something
 - c) A famous person regarded with respect
 - d) A piece of religious art
17. What does "**aftermath**" refer to in the context of the podcast?
- a) The time before an event
 - b) The direct result of an event
 - c) The prediction of an event

d) The preparation for an event

18. What does "**viciously**" mean in the context of the podcast?

a) Gently

b) Calmly

c) Cruelly

d) Softly

19. What does "**undisputed**" mean in the context of the podcast?

a) Argued by everyone

b) Not challenged or questioned

c) Agreed upon by a few

d) Vaguely known

20. What does "**jealous**" mean in the context of the podcast?

a) Insecure or possessive

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- b) Proud of one's achievements
- c) Sad about a failure
- d) Happy for someone's success

Answers

1. c) A hard black stick
2. b) She would benefit from Kerrigan being unable to compete
3. c) She was the first American woman to successfully land a triple axel
4. b) Kerrigan won silver, and Harding finished eighth
5. b) She received a lifetime ban from American professional skating
6. False
7. False
8. False
9. True
10. True
11. game
12. pull
13. filed
14. arch
15. picture, stuff
16. c) A famous person regarded with respect
17. b) The direct result of an event
18. c) Cruelly
19. b) Not challenged or questioned
20. a) Insecure or possessive

